SN 22.86 — SN 22:86 To Anurādha | Anurādha Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

To Anurādha

Anurādha Sutta (SN 22:86)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesāli, in the Great Forest, at the Hall of the Gabled Pavilion. At that time Ven. Anurādha was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut.

Then a large number of wandering sectarians went to Ven. Anurādha and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Anurādha, “Friend Anurādha, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described with (one of) these

four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death."

When this was said, Ven. Anurādha said to the wandering sectarians, "Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death."

When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to Ven. Anurādha, "This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced." So the wandering sectarians, addressing Ven. Anurādha as they would a newcomer or a fool, got up from their seats and left.

Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to Ven. Anurādha: "If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that I will speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?"

Then Ven. Anurādha went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "Just now I was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut. Then a large number of wandering sectarians came and.... said to me, 'Friend Anurādha, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described with (one of) these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"When this was said, I said to them, 'Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to me, 'This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced.' So, addressing me as they would a newcomer or a fool, they got up from their seats and left.

"Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to me: 'If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that I will speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, and no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?'"

“What do you think, Anurādha? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“… Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” …

“… Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” …

“… Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” …

“Is consciousness constant or inconstant?

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, Anurādha, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever….

“Any perception whatsoever….

“Any fabrications whatsoever….

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, Anurādha, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form? … Elsewhere than form? … In feeling? … Elsewhere than feeling? … In perception? … Elsewhere than perception? … In fabrications? … Elsewhere than fabrications? … In consciousness? … Elsewhere than consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“And so, Anurādha—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, ‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is

described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death'?"

"No, lord."

"Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress."